

FAIRY MOONBEAM'S SERIES.

HOP O' MY THUMB



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HOP O' MY THUMB



A VERY poor couple once lived in a village near a wood, where they used to work ; but as they had a family of seven little children, all boys, they could hardly manage to get food enough. The least boy was so tiny that he was called Hop o' my THUMB ; but though so small, he was very clever. One night, when all the children were lying in bed, their parents were crying sadly, because there was no food in the house ; and Hop o' my Thumb was quite in a fright, when he heard them say, that they would take all their little ones into the wood next day, and there leave them, that they might not



see them die of hunger. So he got up very early in the morning, and filled his pockets with pebbles; and when he and his brothers went into the wood, he dropped the stones one by one as he walked along, and by this means, when it was getting dark, they found the way home again. But the next time the poor couple took their children to the wood, the little fellow could not get pebbles, for he had been locked up all night, and had nothing but a few crumbs to drop on the road, and these the birds soon ate up. The wind howled, and the rain fell, and the poor children thought they should all perish; but they still kept moving on, in the hope of getting help.

Hop o' my Thumb kept a good look out, and at last he saw a light not far off. So he cheered up his brothers, and on



they went, till they reached a large house, from which the light was seen to come. After they had knocked at the door, a pleasant-looking dame opened it; and Hop o' my Thumb told how they had lost their way in the wood, and were very tired and hungry. As soon as she heard their story, she told them to go away as fast as they could, because her husband, who was an Ogre, and very fond of eating children, would soon be home. But they all cried so much, and begged so hard for food and shelter, that at last she let them in.

The Ogre's wife had only just time to hide the poor children, when the Ogre came in, and ordered her to lay the cloth, and bring in some sucking-pigs for his supper. Just as he began to use his great carving-knife and fork, he cried out gruffly, "I smell child's flesh!" His wife said it was



only the freshly killed calf ; but he was not to be put off so easily, and, on looking about, he found the poor boys under the bed. The Ogre gave a look of fierce joy when he saw them, but he thought it better to fatten them up before he killed them ; so he told his wife to give them some supper, and put them to bed, in the same room where his daughters were sleeping.

Hop o' my Thumb, fearing mischief, could not sleep ; so he got out of bed, and, on looking about, saw that the Ogre's daughters all had crowns on their heads ; he then changed these for the nightcaps worn by his brothers and himself, and when the Ogre came up in the dark, with his great knife to kill the poor boys, he cut the throats of his own children, instead ! At peep of day, Hop o' my Thumb awoke his brothers, and made them quickly get away with him from



the house. After they were gone, the Ogre, grinning savagely, went up to the bed-room ; but he became almost mad when he found he had killed his daughters, and the little boys were all gone.

The Ogre now put on his magic boots, with which he could take seven leagues at a stride, and set off in pursuit of the poor runaway boys ; but Hop o' my Thumb had made them all hide in a hole under a rock. By-and-by the Ogre came back tired and in a very bad humor, and threw himself on this very rock to sleep. A kind Fairy now appeared to the children, and gave Hop o' my Thumb a nut to crack as soon as he should reach the Ogre's house ; but the Fairy told him he must first take off the Ogre's boots, and send his brothers home, and afterwards put on the magic boots himself, and make the best of his way to the Ogre's house.



Hop o' my Thumb, with the help of the kind Fairy, soon removed the Ogre's seven-leagued boots while he was asleep, and put them on his own little legs ; but as they were magic boots, they fitted him as well as the Ogre, just, indeed, as if they had been made for him. He now called his brothers out of the hole in the rock, and put them in the way to reach home. He then strode on in his magic boots, till he came to the Ogre's house, and, on cracking the nut, he found inside a paper with these words :—

“ Go unto the Ogre's door,
These words speak, and nothing more;
'Ogress, Ogre cannot come ;
Great key give to Hop o' my Thumb.' ”

When the Ogre's wife first saw Hop o' my Thumb, she was ready to kill him for having caused the death of her daugh-



ters ; but no sooner did he utter the magic words—

“Ogress, Ogre cannot come ;
Great key give to Hop o’ my Thumb.”

than she gave him the key of the gold chest, and told him to take as much as he chose. When he saw the great heap of money in the chest, he thought, like a good subject, he should like to help the King to some of the treasure ; and so he made the Ogre’s wife give him as many bags full of gold as he could take away in several journeys.

While Hop o’ my Thumb was so well employed in taking away the wicked Ogre’s treasure, that monster was still sleeping, after his useless journey in search of the poor children, on the rock, where Hop o’ my Thumb left him. When he awoke, and found his magic boots gone, and his limbs so stiff that he could not move, he made a hideous noise, which aroused all the wild beasts of the forest, and they all flew at him in great fury, and gored him to death.



Hop o' my Thumb now went to Court, laden with his hard won spoil, and paid his respects to the King, who did him the favor to accept of his rich gifts, and rewarded him by making him his Head Forester, and his father and brothers foresters under him ; and whenever the King went out hunting, the little fellow used to ride by his side, on a pretty, high-spirited little horse, with rich velvet clothing. The Ogre's kind-hearted wife was also invited to Court, and created Duchess of Dollalolla ; and she shared the rest of her husband's wealth with Hop o' my Thumb, who was greatly beloved by all for his spirit and good sense ; indeed, his Majesty at last dubbed him a Knight, and made him his chief Privy Councillor, saying, that as he had been always so shrewd and clever in helping his brothers, he must surely be able to give him good advice whenever he might need it.

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